

February 8, 2010

Dear Honorable E. Benjamin Nelson,

My name is Joe Metcalf and I am director of hospital medicine at Faith Regional Health Services in Norfolk. I am writing to express my support for Faith Regional Health Services' (FRHS) pursuit of federal appropriations for Fiscal Year 2010. As a busy physician who cares for a large number of hospitalized patients from our catchment area, I understand the imperative to create authentic electronic networking with our critical access hospitals which rely on our services.

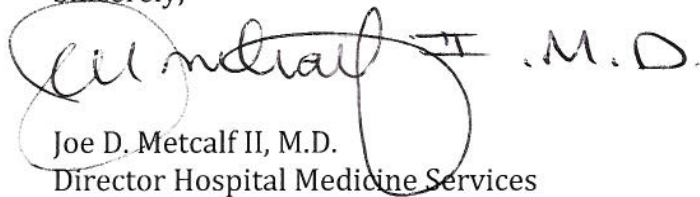
FRHS is in the middle of a \$10 million electronic health record implementation and it would like to extend the benefits of this system to its rural partners in Northeast Nebraska. FRHS has shown tremendous leadership in expanding access to and enhancing the quality of care in our region, and this next initiative will be a powerful tool to allow for improved information sharing across the continuum of our services to patients; this ultimately results in better care of patients at the bedside.

As you know, Nebraska's large geographic mass along with its highly decentralized population creates major challenges for healthcare providers, including lower economies and higher costs as well as physician and nursing shortages. Healthcare providers in Northeast Nebraska have moved forward on their missions in spite of these challenges, but our rural providers are especially in need of assistance to increase access and enhance quality. FRHS is in an ideal position to extend its technological capabilities to the rural hospitals and clinics due to its centralized location and access to capital.

FRHS's efforts will provide our rural hospitals and clinics access to the most advanced medical imaging technology; they will also give our clinicians immediate access to medical history, test results, and telehealth assessments. Currently, much of this is done with outdated technology at a much higher cost and over significant distances.

As you know, congressional funds are available to help offset the costs of such an undertaking. We are excited about the pursuit of these funds, and about what they could do for our regional healthcare system. We sincerely appreciate your support and are hopeful that you will consider this a cause worthy of federal funding. Thank you for your consideration and your time. We look forward to your efforts on our behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe D. Metcalf II, M.D.", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Joe D. Metcalf II, M.D.
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